

TOWN OF MANSFIELD
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 8, 2012
MANSFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

Town Clerk Mary Stanton called the Annual Town Meeting for Budget Consideration to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Mansfield Middle School Auditorium. The Town Clerk read the Notice and Warning of the Meeting and explained the eligibility requirements for voting. She then requested nominations for Moderator.

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson nominated Ron Schurin to serve as Moderator. Hearing no other nominations the nominations were closed. Motion to approve Mr. Schurin as Moderator passed unanimously.

Mr. Schurin spoke to the history and value of town meetings in New England. Without objection Town Clerk Mary Stanton was appointed secretary to the meeting and Town Attorney Dennis O'Brien was appointed as the parliamentarian. A request to stipulate the adoption of Roberts Rules of Order was approved without objection. Mr. Schurin outlined the procedures for those wishing to speak and requested citizens limit their comments to five minutes.

Mr. Schurin recognized Mayor Elizabeth Paterson who thanked her fellow Council members and Town staff for their work on the budget. This budget reflects the priorities of the Council including maintaining current services, promoting key Council goals, increasing the General Fund contribution to the Fund Balance and increasing the General Fund contribution to the Capital Budget thereby initiating a pay-as-you-go plan. The proposed budget would result in a 1.79% increase. Mayor Paterson urged the adoption of the budget.

Mr. Schurin introduced the Chair of the Council's Finance Committee Bill Ryan and Mansfield Board of Education's Chair Mark LaPlaca to present a more detailed explanation of the budget.

Councilor Ryan reviewed the General Fund Budget including the general government expenditure trends and cost drivers. Mr. Ryan explained both the Storrs Center General Fund revenues and expenditures and the Storrs Center Reserve Fund revenues and expenditures.

Board of Education Chair Mark LaPlaca introduced the members of the Board and described the Board's budget as one that maintains all current services while actually maintaining a zero increase for the fourth year in a row. Mr. LaPlaca explained the use of one time revenue sources and noted the no increase contracts with employees helped to realize this budget.

Mr. Ryan reviewed highlights of the Revenue Fund, the Capital Fund and the Capital Non-recurring Fund. Mr. Ryan commented the Council has proposed increasing the General Fund contribution to both the Fund Balance to eventually bring the balance to the 10%-15% recommended by rating agencies and to the Capital Fund to implement the pay-as-you-go plan. In contrast to many other area towns, Mansfield's Grand List has increased by .76% and the non-tax revenue has increased by 1.6%.

In summary Mr. Ryan noted the tax impact on the median single family residence would be an increase of about .48 mills or about an \$81 tax increase for the year.

Mr. Ryan offered the following resolutions for consideration:

RESOLVED: That the proposed General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 in the amount of \$35,533,490 which proposed budget was adopted by the Council on April 23, 2012, be adopted and that the sums estimated and set forth in said budget be appropriated for the purpose indicated.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-51, the proportionate share for the Town of Mansfield of the annual budget for Regional School District No. 19 shall be added to the General Fund Budget appropriation for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 and said sums shall be paid by the Town to the Regional School District as they become available.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital Projects Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 in the amount of \$ 1,735,840 be adopted provided that the portion proposed to be funded by bonds or notes shall, at the appropriate times, be introduced for action by the Town Council subject to a vote by referendum as required by Section 407 of the Town Charter.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 in the amount of \$ 1,562,210 be adopted.

The motion was seconded.

Moderator Ron Schurin outlined the process for making amendments to the proposed budget and the voting process. Mr. Schurin thanked the community members and EO Smith students who assisted with voting process.

Councilor Meredith Lindsey spoke for the minority Council members who feel the proposed budget grows the Town's financial obligations at a time when revenues

are not growing. Ms. Lindsey objected to the 8% increase in the Town budget and the use of one time Board of Education revenues to balance the budget.

Joan Buck, Sumner Drive and onetime Council member, thanked the Council, Board of Education and staff for the development of this fair and equitable budget. Ms. Buck is in favor of the pay-as-you-go plan, calling it fair and practical.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, called the question and requested a written vote. The motion was seconded and failed with 112 in favor and 124 in opposition.

Chris Kueffner, Ravine Road, expressed frustration with the increase in the proposed budget noting that an increase in employee wages is a pay cut to the people of the Town. He suggested employees be awarded nonmonetary compensation.

Dan Raiola, Buckingham Road, questioned the need for an additional Resident State Trooper to sustain 24 hour coverage for the Town.

Town Manager Matt Hart explained the recent Police Study identified an optimal staffing level of 2 troopers on duty at all times. This additional position is a step in that direction.

Councilor Moran noted staffing is complicated by rotating shifts, training time and administrative responsibilities.

Gene Salorio, Southwood Road, asked whether prior to the pay-as-you-go plan did the bonded items go to referendum; what is the HUD grant to be used for; and what regulations would govern Fund Balance spending?

Town Manager Matt Hart stated the HUD grant funds would be used for planning assistance and would involve both the hiring of consultants and some employees. For example, a portion of the Natural Resources and Sustainability Coordinator would be funded with this grant.

Finance Director Cherie Trahan stated the annual budget determines expenditures. Current policy discourages appropriations from the Fund Balance with the exception of emergencies at which time Town Council action followed by Town Meeting approval is required.

Cynara Stites, Hanks Hill Road, asked which pay raises for employees have already been finalized and which are still being negotiated?

Town Manager Matt Hart and Superintendent Fred Baruzzi identified the status of each employee bargaining unit.

Susan Adams, Chaffeeville Road, provided a calculation showing how many hours would be needed for 24 hour police coverage.

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, stated he is impressed with the prudent and wise proposed budget, how the two parties have worked together, and the quality of town services compared to other area towns.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, asked if even during difficult times do we want to lose what makes Mansfield special? He applauded the efforts of the Town Council and Board of Education.

Tom Morrison, Farmstead Road, requested information on the cost to the Town for the Storrs Center Parking Garage.

Mr. Hart commented on the funding sources for construction, addressed the cost overruns, and potential operating scenarios after the initial Storrs Center Alliance's seven-year agreement has been concluded.

Art Smith, Mulberry Road, expressed his support for President Obama and Governor Malloy commenting he believes the budget fails to recognize economic realities (Statement attached).

Ric Hossack moved to amend the resolution by increasing the Parks and Recreation Program (92000) amount by \$450,000 which would allow all residents to utilize the Community Center. The motion was seconded.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, spoke in favor of the health benefits citizens would realize from using the Community Center.

Don Curtis, Separatist Road, asked if this money could be earmarked just for the Parks and Recreation Department 92000 Program Fund.

Town Manager Matt Hart advised an analysis would need to be done to determine if this added contribution would achieve the stated goal. Mr. Hart stated such a policy change would most probably increase the mill rate by 3.67%.

Mr. Schurin clarified that an increase in the appropriation to the Parks and Recreation budget would not necessarily designate to what purposes the funds would be allocated.

Carl Mohrbacher, Warrenville Road, spoke against the amendment saying there is not enough room nor machines to accommodate all residents.

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, agreed the concept of universal membership for all residents is worth exploring. Mr. Anderson respects the process and therefore feels tonight's venue is not the proper time to consider this proposal.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, agreed with Mr. Hossack's amendment and feels the additional funds may be sufficient to open the Community Center for all residents.

Peter Millman, Dog Lane, supported the concept of the amendment and feels the idea should have a broad base of support and be well received. The proposal has not been well thought out and so no action should be taken this evening.

William "Chip" Jordan, South Eagleville Road, called the question. The motion was seconded and passed by the requisite two-thirds majority.

The amendment as presented was defeated in a standing vote.

Howard Raphaelson, Timber Drive, spoke in favor of the budget and believes the quality of Town services is high in comparison to other like-sized towns. Mr. Raphaelson supports the marvelous job done by the Town at bargain rates.

Agnieska Wusatowska-Sarnek, Lebanon Square, spoke in favor of the budget and asked that cuts to the education budget be the last resort.

David Freudmann, Eastwood Road, stated, given the statutory Minimum Budget Requirement education budgets cannot be cut.

A motion to call the question was made, seconded and passed by two-thirds of those present.

The Moderator called for a vote on the appropriations as presented.

The vote was by paper ballot.

Those in favor were 174 and 100 were in opposition. The budget passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

